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Farley, James Aloysius

Address of  
Hon. James A. Farley

Washington, D.C.

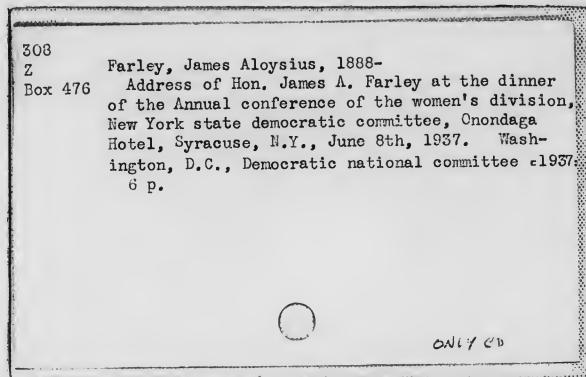
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ADDRESS  
OF  
Hon. JAMES A. FARLEY

At the Dinner of the Annual Conference of the Women's Division,  
New York State Democratic Committee

SYRACUSE, N. Y.

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JUNE 8th, 1937

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Hon. JAMES A. FARLEY

At the Dinner of the Annual Conference of the Women's Division,  
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ONONDAGA HOTEL, SYRACUSE, N. Y.

JUNE 8th, 1937



DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
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IT occurred to me, when I first began thinking of what I might say to you tonight, that the most original contribution I could make to this gathering would be to give my own reaction to the emergence of women upon the political scene. One of the most interesting aspects of human beings is their adaptability. You are gathered here today to discuss politics. No one seems to consider it an extraordinary occasion, and yet, eighteen years ago the question of whether women were to be accorded suffrage was agitating most of the women and all of the men of the country. Now, less than two decades after they were granted the vote, women participated in government in a major way much to the betterment of government itself and greatly to the credit of modern womanhood.

My political life covers the entire era of "votes for women". I was in politics before you were allowed to vote and I have had a considerable amount of political experience since then. I think we can all look back with amazement at the fears of those conservatives who held that the extension of suffrage to women was a blow at our government. Instead, women's emergence in the political arena has caused a quickening social consciousness in government. This is fortunate because the social processes—the protection of the home, the human treatment of people in industry, the regulation of the hours and conditions of labor for women—these are essentially questions in which women have a real and fundamental interest. I do not in any way wish to accuse my own sex of any lack in this respect, but I must confess that these questions appeal more immediately to women. I think that the great interest of the women of this country in

the President's program for social legislation in the last election indicates clearly how much women think and feel upon these subjects.

I have in mind one rather oldish lady who, I think, illustrates what I mean. A few days before election she was asked how she intended voting. She answered, "I generally vote the Republican ticket but I think the time comes when you must do the right thing regardless of prejudices. So, I am going to vote for Mr. Roosevelt."

As our civilization grows more complex, the area of our lives upon which government intrudes becomes greater and greater. And as it does, it becomes more and more necessary to have those who participate in government better trained for their positions so that the very business of government can be carried on more efficiently and more intelligently. Government, like life itself, or any other living organism, is constantly evolving. There are no formulae by which its evolution in any particular direction can be guaranteed. One guarantee only can we give, and that is that the people, if they be intelligently informed, will concern themselves intelligently with their government. They can in this way give to themselves the best that human experience and wisdom can bring in the way of self-government.

I have said that government becomes more and more complex, and if our government is not to become an outworn and archaic form, it must respond to its newer responsibilities. With the attraction of women's interest to public affairs, I have high hopes of the future, for women, fundamentally interested as they are in the social aspects of life, can, through their concern in the problems of the day, help government to the proper solutions of the difficulties that con-

front us. I have seen, in my time, the growth of public affairs from where they were the interest almost exclusively of a few who were active in party councils to now where they are at the point of interesting every citizen of the country.

And now that it is accepted as proper and right that women's interest in government is real, intelligent and earnest, I look upon meetings like these as happy portents for the future. There are problems ahead of us, especially in the field of social legislation, which I, for one, can face with much more confidence when I know that you are weighing the *pros* and *cons* of those problems and are prepared to indicate your desire for their solution.

Already women have had a major part in the molding of public opinion to such an extent that we have as actual accomplishments such far reaching acts as those to promote World Peace and Child Welfare. It has been the activities of women that have facilitated the attainment of such social reforms as Old Age Pensions, Unemployment Insurance, Minimum Wages for women in Industry and Humane Immigration laws. Women have demanded and government has provided Play Grounds and Parks, Hospitals and Sanitariums and an extension of Educational Facilities. You have been willing to work and fight for these through defeat and victory for all these years, and tonight as you sit in this room, I am sure you have a great sense of satisfaction in knowing that these early dreams have come true.

But, great as had been your accomplishment, there is still much to be done. In the first place, women must be on guard to see to it that some untoward event does not occur to cause a slip back from the advanced position attained.

Progress has too often been obstructed by a temporary shift in mass opinion caused usually by a letdown of effort on the part of those who, having attained some of their goals, allowed for a time their enthusiasm to become dormant. Continued vigilance will insure continued progress, and I know that the enthusiasm of your leaders will keep you continually vigilant so as to avoid any temporary retrogression.

Secondly, the progressive enactments which you have brought about have come so quickly that the administrative machinery of these progressive laws have had to be set up with practically no experience as a guide. Consequently, the administration of the various phases of social legislation must be watched carefully so that any defects can be quickly remedied to the end that a simple and efficient administration of all these laws may be brought about without undue delay. The quicker this is accomplished, the less effective will be the criticism on the part of those who disagree with our policies and the sooner will these enactments be accepted as a permanent part of our government.

Thirdly, many things are yet to be done. We must solve the problem of Child Labor, nationally. Everyone knows that Child Labor must be abolished and I am sure that in due course a formula can be reached which will erase forever child labor from our national picture.

While great strides have been made in the way of slum clearance and better housing, the field is still of great magnitude. This is a problem that should be extremely interesting to women. We must not in any way let up in our efforts until decent living quarters are within reach of all.

Labor has gained more leisure and more income and when

the proper balance is finally struck and laws enacted to insure its permanency, the country will be more prosperous, more contented, and closer to the ideals which inspired the founding of the Republic.

Agriculture must be protected so that those who work the land will have the same benefits that accrue to those who live in the cities. This means good roads, rural electrification, adequate marketing facilities, and actual protection against drought and flood.

Labor and agriculture, which I have both mentioned separately, have also a mutual responsibility to each other, which of course, will ultimately be recognized, thus opening the way for each group to insure the prosperity of the other group. Women can take a great part in bringing about an understanding between these two great groups of our population through the dissemination of information which will promote the working out of their problems. Here again, we must work toward a balance and here again, once we obtain the balance, we will have made permanent strides toward permanent prosperity and permanent contentment.

Some may say that I am giving too much credit to the women of the country for the social progress we have made. Some will say that I am leaning too heavily upon the women of the country for the solution of problems yet to be solved. This is not the case. Both men and women will have to work together as they have done in the past. However, women, by their nature, supply elements which, when coupled with the elements common to men, facilitate progress. It is hard to put your finger on just what each can do best, but you cannot deny that there has been more social progress in the United States in the past eighteen years since the

women have had the vote and have cooperated with men in public affairs, than there was in the whole of our history before women were enfranchised.

Now I want to inject a personal note. It is almost ten years since I became associated in an official way with the state organization of our party. For almost half of that time, I have also been Chairman of the national organization of our party. My way has been made easier by the co-operation that has been given me by the Democratic women of America and of New York. They have performed a patriotic service for which I shall forever be grateful. There is no need of me repeating that I am for equal rights for women in politics. There is no need of me saying that the credit for what we have accomplished belongs to women equally with men. There is no need of me adding, but I will add, that the participation of women in our party councils has been responsible for the great strides made by our party in the state and the nation. I bespeak your continued interest, your continued enthusiasm and your continued support. Keep up the good work and we will have nothing to fear in the future. Our state will remain Democratic and we shall elect a majority to the Constitutional Convention to insure writing into our fundamental law of the state those progressive enactments which have been so ably fostered and approved during the administration of our present great Governor, Herbert H. Lehman.

Nationally, too, your support and effort will assist in the continuation of liberal government, and there will be no end to the crusade of progress so well under way under the inspiring leadership of the people's warrior, our great—President, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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